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THE STAR BRAND
RETURN TO THE PITT
PITTSBURGH 25Mi.
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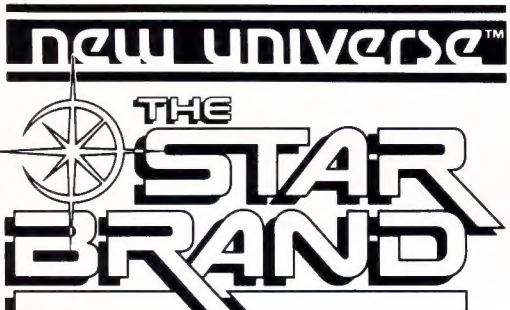

The **Star Brand**... the most potent object of power the Earth has ever seen. Where it came from, how it arrived on Earth, and what energies it employs are all unfathomable mysteries. Whosoever wields its power can do virtually anything. The only limitation to its use is the imagination and courage of its wielder.

So far, two men of Earth have possessed its power. The first, known only as the *Old Man*, was a Dutch count who acquired the Star Brand some 500 years ago. He kept the power a secret while it grew inside his body, aging his body very slowly. Eventually he realized that the power was too unstable for him to ever control, and on July 22, 1986, the Old Man tried to transfer its power to an asteroid. The flash of energy caused by the transfer atomized the asteroid and sent the Star Brand's awesome energies cascading into space, bombarding the Earth with mutagenic energy. This occurrence, dubbed the White Event, lasted less than two seconds, but had worldwide consequences. Two human beings in every million were affected by those energies and began to change, assuming paranormal forms and abilities.

Realizing that he still possessed a fraction of its nigh-infinite power, the Old Man passed the Star Brand along to another human being, Pittsburgh-born car mechanic *Kenneth Connell*. *Connell* employed the Star Brand energies for months, fending off the Old Man's efforts to test his abilities, and finally decided to assume the dual identity of a costumed hero. But when *Connell* realized that he could not wield the power wisely enough, he too tried to transfer the power to an inanimate object. Soaring ten miles above his home, *Connell* transferred the Star Brand power into a bent dumbbell. This action caused the Star Brand's alien to obliterate everything within a 50-mile wide sphere around it, including the city of Pittsburgh. *Connell*'s body itself was disintegrated in the Black Event, but has since been resurrected by the power of the Star Brand.

Now, the new wielder of the Star Brand tries to use his power for the good of mankind...

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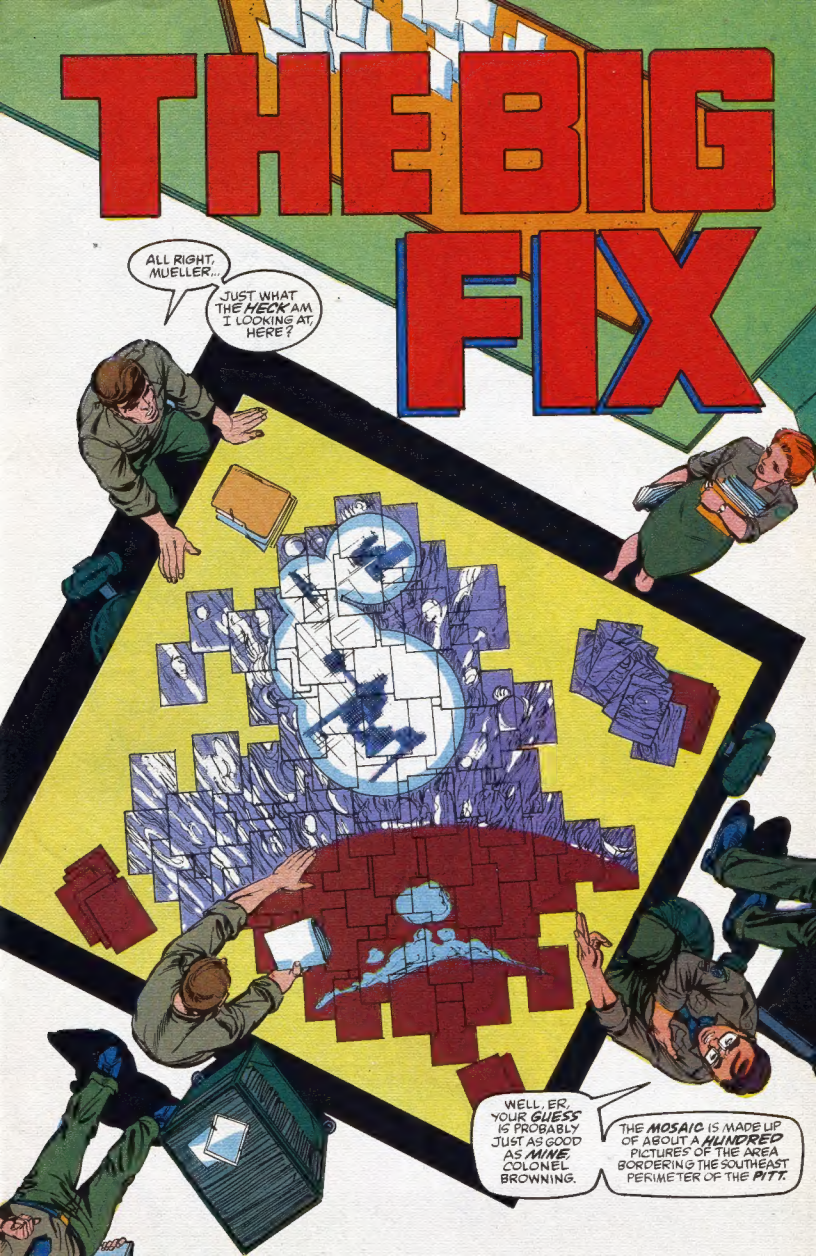
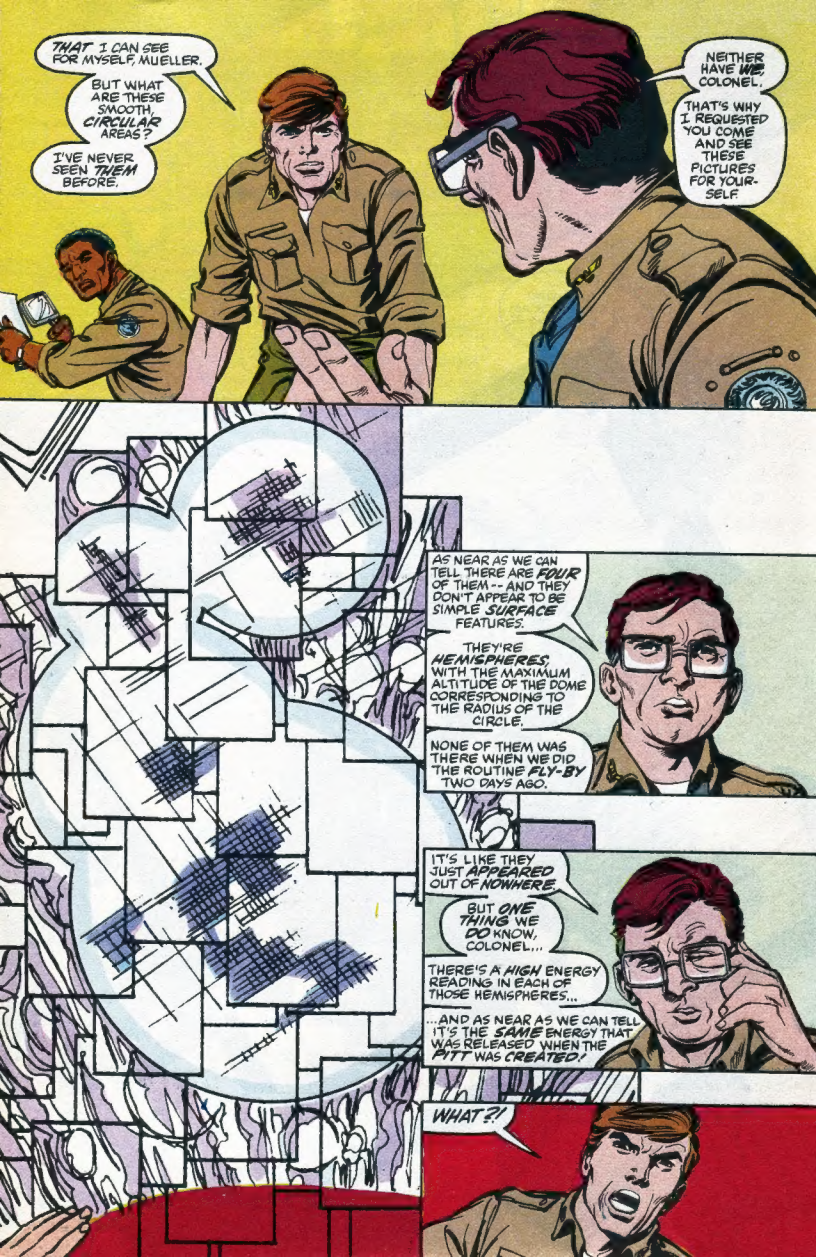
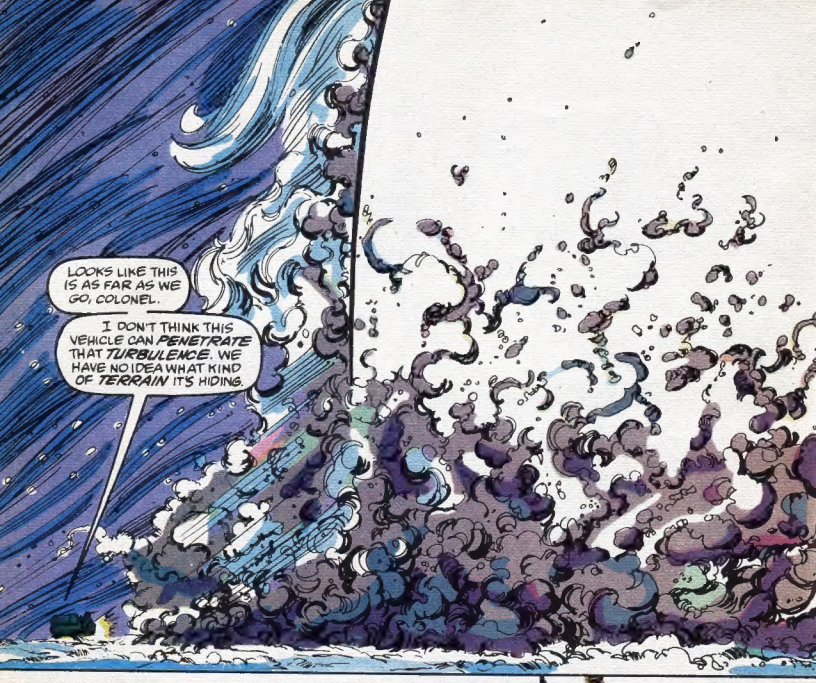

THE BIG FIX
ALL RIGHT, MUELLER...
JUST WHAT THE HECK AM I LOOKING AT, HERE?
WELL, ER, YOUR GUESS IS PROBABLY JUST AS GOOD AS MINE, COLONEL BROWNING.
THE MOSAIC IS MADE UP OF ABOUT A HUNDRED PICTURES OF THE AREA BORDERING THE SOUTHEAST PERIMETER OF THE PITT.


THAT I CAN SEE FOR MYSELF, MUELLER.
BUT WHAT ARE THESE SMOOTH, CIRCULAR AREAS?
I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM BEFORE.
NEITHER HAVE WE, COLONEL.
THAT'S WHY I REQUESTED YOU COME AND SEE THESE PICTURES FOR YOURSELF.
AS NEAR AS WE CAN TELL THERE ARE FOUR OF THEM -- AND THEY DON'T APPEAR TO BE SIMPLE SURFACE FEATURES.
THEY'RE HEMISPHERES, WITH THE MAXIMUM ALTITUDE OF THE DOME CORRESPONDING TO THE RADIUS OF THE CIRCLE.
NONE OF THEM WAS THERE WHEN WE DID THE ROUTINE FLY-BY TWO DAYS AGO.
IT'S LIKE THEY JUST APPEARED OUT OF NOWHERE.
BUT ONE THING WE DO KNOW, COLONEL...
THERE'S A HIGH ENERGY READING IN EACH OF THOSE HEMISPHERES...
...AND AS NEAR AS WE CAN TELL IT'S THE SAME ENERGY THAT WAS RELEASED WHEN THE PITT WAS CREATED!
WHAT?!

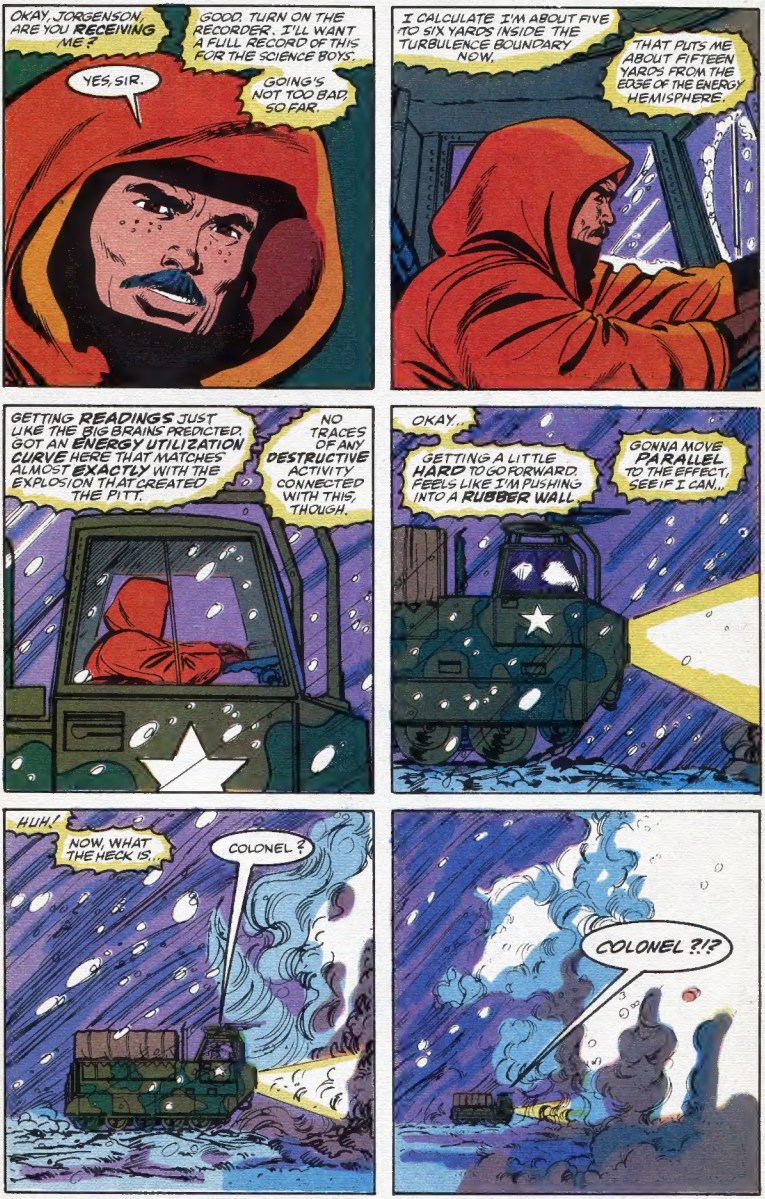
I CAN'T SAY AS HOW I THINK THIS IS A TERRIFICALLY GOOD IDEA, COLONEL BROWNING.
I DON'T RECALL ASKING FOR AN OPINION, CORPORAL JORGENSON.
STOP
NO, SIR, YOU DIDN'T.
BUT IF I MAY REMIND THE COLONEL, THAT AIN'T SNOW FALLIN' OUT THERE.
IT'S VOLCANIC ASH. AND IF THAT BIG FIRECRACKER BUILDING IN THE PIT SHOULD DECIDE TO BLOW...
... BOTH OUR WIDOWS WILL RECEIVE NICE, SOFT PENSIONS FOR THE REST OF THEIR LIVES.
NOW SHUT UP AND KEEP DRIVING, CORPORAL.
I WANT TO SEE WHAT'S GOING ON OUT THERE.
YES, SIR.
ESTIMATING PERIMETER OF THE FIRST ENERGY DOME IN TWENTY MINUTES, SIR.
WASHINGTON 3 MILES
30


LOOKS LIKE THIS IS AS FAR AS WE GO, COLONEL.
I DON'T THINK THIS VEHICLE CAN PENETRATE THAT TURBULENCE. WE HAVE NO IDEA WHAT KIND OF TERRAIN IT'S HIDING.

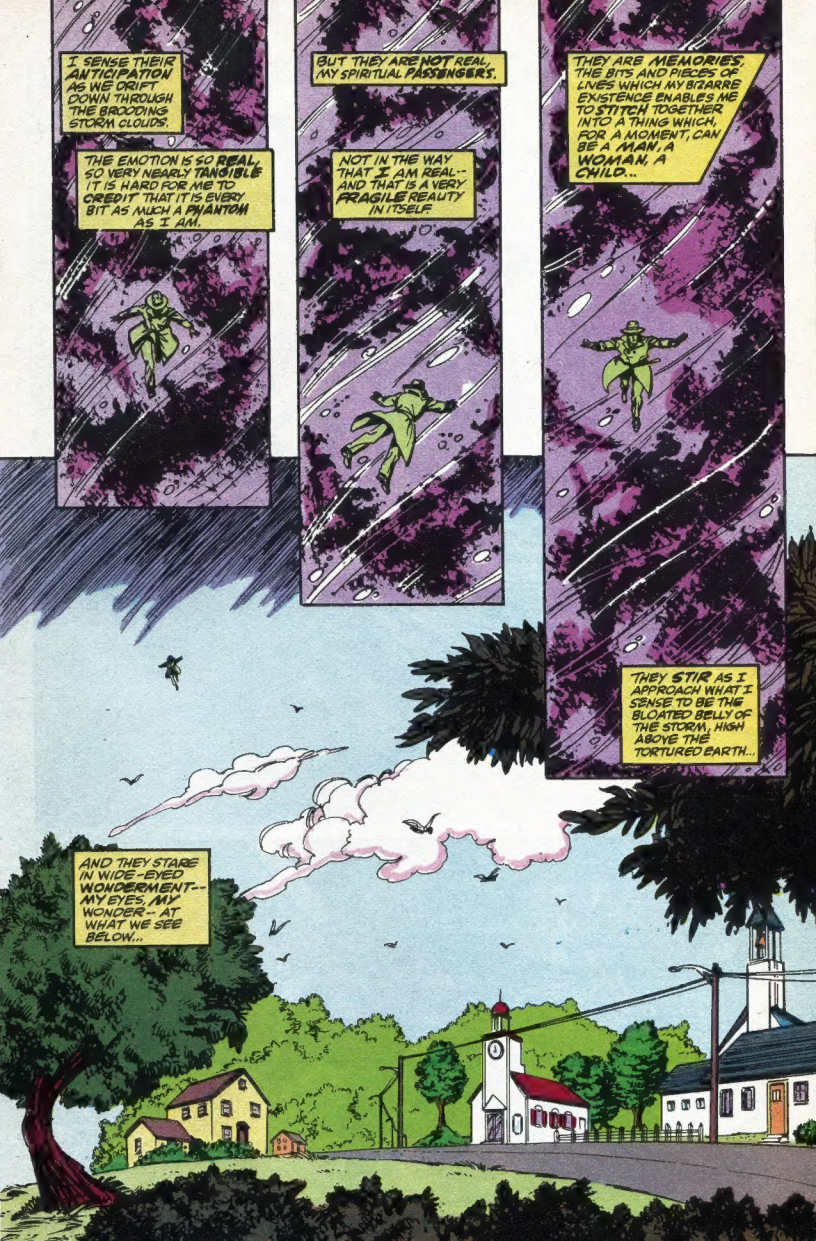
YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT, CORPORAL.
HOLD THIS POSITION. I'M GOING TO RECONNOITER ON FOOT.
YOU'RE KIDDING, SIR!
THERE'S WHOLE MOUNTAINS OF DIRT BEIN' THROWN 'ROUND OUT THERE!

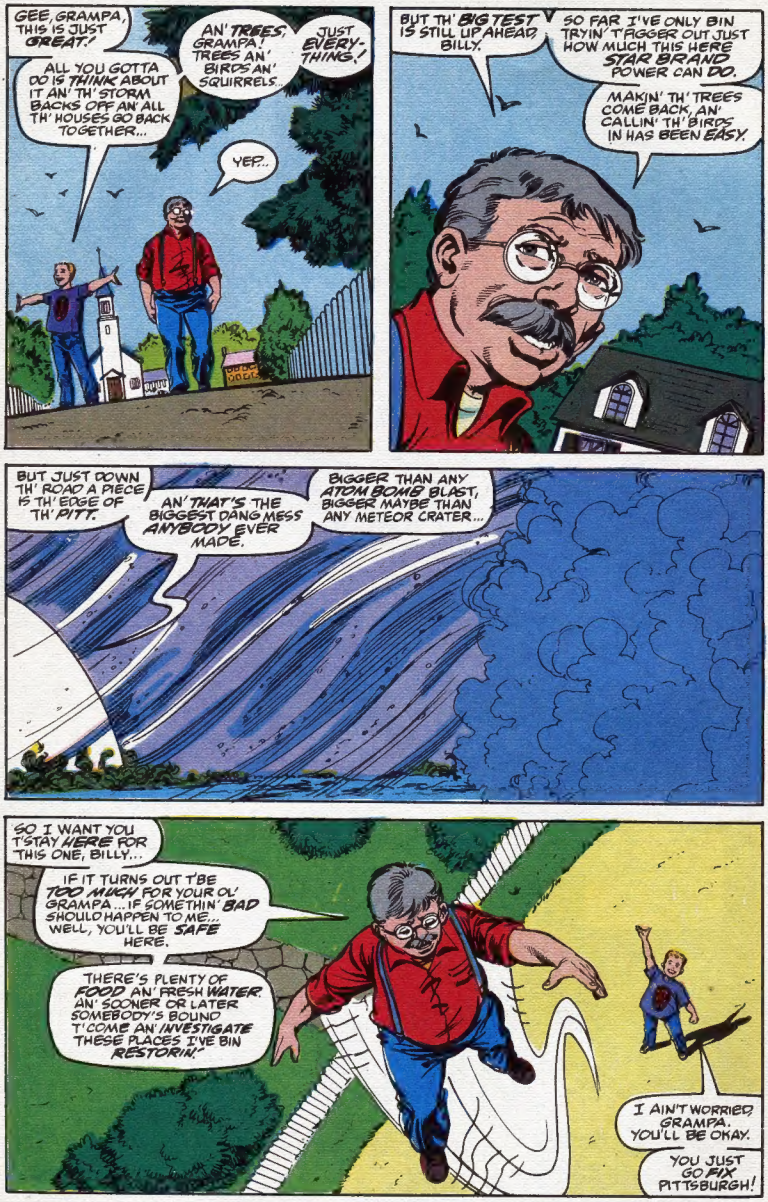
I CAN SEE THAT, CORPORAL.
I COULD ALSO SEE IT IN THE INFRARED PICTURES. AND THAT'S WHY I'M GOING TO TETHER MYSELF TO THE M548A1 WITH THIS UNBREAKABLE NYLON LINE.

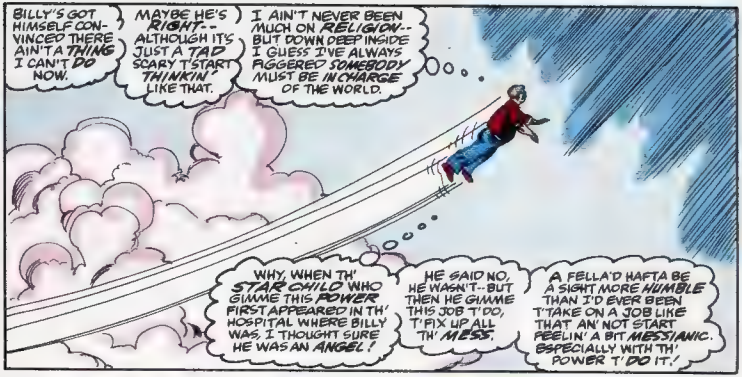
YES, SIR.
BUT... STAY IN RADIO CONTACT.
NATURALLY...

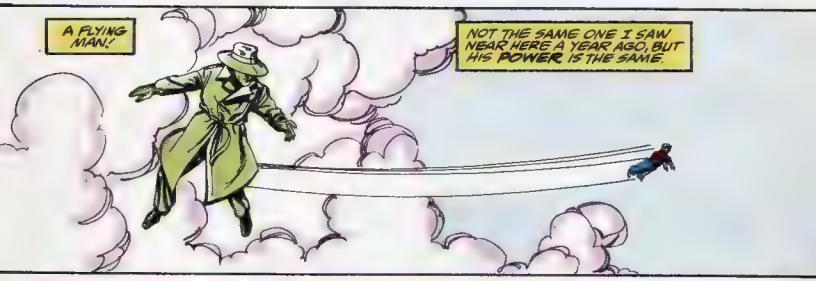

OKAY, JORGENSON, ARE YOU RECEIVING ME?
YES, SIR.
GOOD. TURN ON THE RECORDER. I'LL WANT A FULL RECORD OF THIS FOR THE SCIENCE BOYS.
GOING'S NOT TOO BAD, SO FAR.
I CALCULATE I'M ABOUT FIVE TO SIX YARDS INSIDE THE TURBULENCE BOUNDARY NOW.
THAT PUTS ME ABOUT FIFTEEN YARDS FROM THE EDGE OF THE ENERGY HEMISPHERE.
GETTING READINGS JUST LIKE THE BIG BRAINS PREDICTED. GOT AN ENERGY UTILIZATION CURVE HERE THAT MATCHES ALMOST EXACTLY WITH THE EXPLOSION THAT CREATED THE PITT.
NO TRACES OF ANY DESTRUCTIVE ACTIVITY CONNECTED WITH THIS, THOUGH.
OKAY...
GETTING A LITTLE HARD TO GO FORWARD. FEELS LIKE I'M PUSHING INTO A RUBBER WALL.
GONNA MOVE PARALLEL TO THE EFFECT, SEE IF I CAN...
HUH!
NOW, WHAT THE HECK IS...
COLONEL?
COLONEL?!?

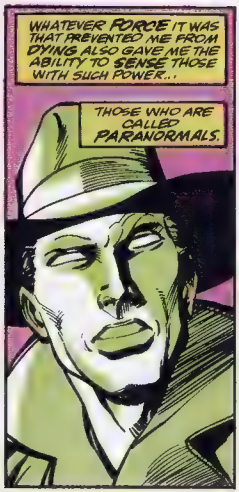
I AM NELSON KOHLER.
SOMETIMES I FEEL IT NECESSARY TO REMIND MYSELF OF THAT SIMPLE FACT. IT IS NOT A THING WHICH OCCUPIES MY MIND IN QUITE THE SAME WAY IT DID BEFORE I DIED.
OH, YES... I AM DEAD. I AM A GHOST. I'VE BEEN SO FOR OVER TWO YEARS, NOW. I DIED ON JULY 22, 1986.
IT HAS COME TO SEEM TO ME EXTRAORDINARILY SYMBOLIC THAT I SHOULD HAVE DIED ON THE SAME DAY THE WORLD AROUND ME WAS REBORN.
IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS I HAVE BEEN CONTENT TO DRIFT ABOUT THE WORLD, THE SILENT INTANGIBLE WITNESS TO THE PANGS OF THIS VIOLENT NATIVITY.
BUT NOW I AM DRAWN BACK...
BACK TO A PLACE OF INCOMPREHENSIBLE PAIN, OF UNIMAGINABLE SAVAGERY.
THE OTHER VOICES WHICH OCCASIONALLY SPEAK THROUGH ME DEMAND I RETURN TO THE PLACE WHERE THEY, TOO, DIED.
AND SO WE ALL COME BACK AGAIN--COME HOME AGAIN--TO PITTSBURGH.

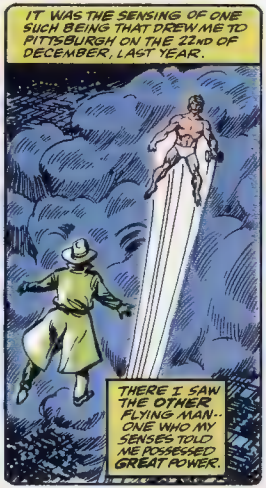

I SENSE THEIR ANTICIPATION AS WE DRIFT DOWN THROUGH THE BROODING STORM CLOUDS.
THE EMOTION IS SO REAL, SO VERY NEARLY TANGIBLE IT IS HARD FOR ME TO CREDIT THAT IT IS EVERY BIT AS MUCH A PHANTOM AS I AM.
BUT THEY ARE NOT REAL, MY SPIRITUAL PASSENGERS.
NOT IN THE WAY THAT I AM REAL-- AND THAT IS A VERY FRAGILE REALITY IN ITSELF.
THEY ARE MEMORIES: THE BITS AND PIECES OF LIVES WHICH MY BIZARRE EXISTENCE ENABLES ME TO STITCH TOGETHER INTO A THING WHICH, FOR A MOMENT, CAN BE A MAN, A WOMAN, A CHILD...
THEY STIR AS I APPROACH WHAT I SENSE TO BE THE BLOATED BELLY OF THE STORM, HIGH ABOVE THE TORTURED EARTH...
AND THEY STARE IN WIDE-EYED WONDERMENT-- MY EYES, MY WONDER-- AT WHAT WE SEE BELOW...

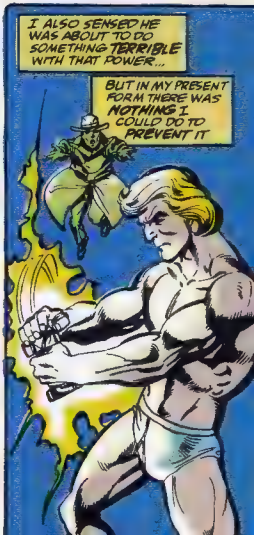

GEE, GRAMPA, THIS IS JUST GREAT.
AN' TREES, GRAMPA! TREES AN' BIRDS AN' SQUIRRELS.
JUST EVERY-THING.!
ALL YOU GOTTA DO IS THINK ABOUT IT AN' TH' STORM BACKS OFF AN' ALL TH' HOUSES GO BACK TOGETHER...
YEP...
BUT TH' BIG TEST IS STILL UP AHEAD, BILLY.
SO FAR I'VE ONLY BIN TRYIN' T' FIGGER OUT JUST HOW MUCH THIS HERE STAR BRAND POWER CAN DO.
MAKIN' TH' TREES COME BACK, AN' CALLIN' TH' BIRDS IN HAS BEEN EASY.
BUT JUST DOWN TH' ROAD A PIECE IS TH' EDGE OF TH' PITT.
AN' THAT'S THE BIGGEST DANG MESS ANYBODY EVER MADE.
BIGGER THAN ANY ATOM BOMB BLAST, BIGGER MAYBE THAN ANY METEOR CRATER...
SO I WANT YOU T'STAY HERE FOR THIS ONE, BILLY...
IF IT TURNS OUT T'BE TOO MUCH FOR YOUR OL' GRAMPA... IF SOMETHIN' BAD SHOULD HAPPEN TO ME... WELL, YOU'LL BE SAFE HERE.
THERE'S PLENTY OF FOOD AN' FRESH WATER AN' SOONER OR LATER SOMEBODY'S BOUND T'COME AN' INVESTIGATE THESE PLACES I'VE BIN RESTORIN'.
I AIN'T WORRIED, GRAMPA. YOU'LL BE OKAY.
YOU JUST GO FIX PITTSBURGH!


BILLY'S GOT HIMSELF CONVINCED THERE AIN'T A THING I CAN'T DO NOW.
MAYBE HE'S RIGHT-- ALTHOUGH IT'S JUST A TAD SCARY T'START THINKIN' LIKE THAT.
I AIN'T NEVER BEEN MUCH ON RELIGION-- BUT DOWN DEEP INSIDE I GUESS I'VE ALWAYS FIGGERED SOMEBODY MUST BE IN CHARGE OF THE WORLD.
WHY, WHEN TH' STAR CHILD WHO GIMME THIS POWER FIRST APPEARED IN TH' HOSPITAL WHERE BILLY WAS, I THOUGHT SURE HE WAS AN ANGEL!
HE SAID NO, HE WASN'T-- BUT THEN HE GIMME THIS JOB T'DO, T'FIX UP ALL TH' MESS.
A FELLA'D HAFTA BE A SIGHT MORE HUMBLE THAN I'D EVER BEEN T'TAKE ON A JOB LIKE THAT AN' NOT START FEELIN' A BIT MESSIANIC. ESPECIALLY WITH TH' POWER T'DO IT.'


A FLYING MAN!'
NOT THE SAME ONE I SAW NEAR HERE A YEAR AGO, BUT HIS POWER IS THE SAME.


WHATEVER FORCE IT WAS THAT PREVENTED ME FROM DYING ALSO GAVE ME THE ABILITY TO SENSE THOSE WITH SUCH POWER...
THOSE WHO ARE CALLED PARANORMALS.


IT WAS THE SENSING OF ONE SUCH BEING THAT DREW ME TO PITTSBURGH ON THE 22ND OF DECEMBER, LAST YEAR.
THERE I SAW THE OTHER FLYING MAN-- ONE WHO MY SENSES TOLD ME POSSESSED GREAT POWER.


I ALSO SENSED HE WAS ABOUT TO DO SOMETHING TERRIBLE WITH THAT POWER...
BUT IN MY PRESENT FORM THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO TO PREVENT IT

TO THIS DAY I DO NOT KNOW WHAT HE INTENDED TO DO BY HIS STRANGE ACTIONS...

BUT I KNOW WHAT HE DID.

IN A SINGLE, SEARING SECOND THE STEEL CITY WAS OBLITERATED.

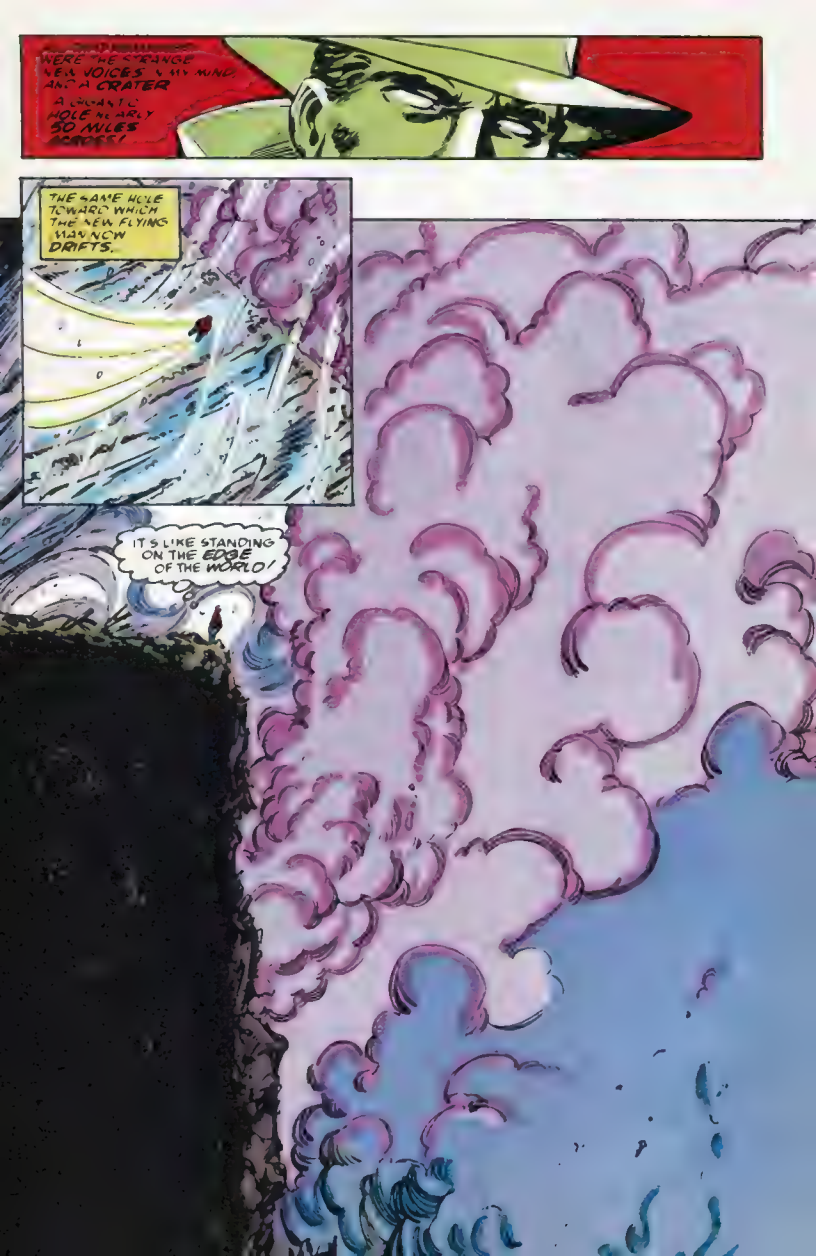
WAS UNAFFECTED BY THE AWESOME BLAST...

...BUT I SAW THE FLYING MAN LITERALLY TORN APART BEFORE MY EYES.

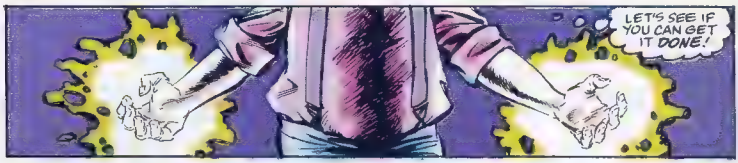
DRIVEN TO UNDERSTAND ALL THAT I HAD JUST SEEN I DESCENDED THROUGH THE SWIRLING STORM CLOUDS...

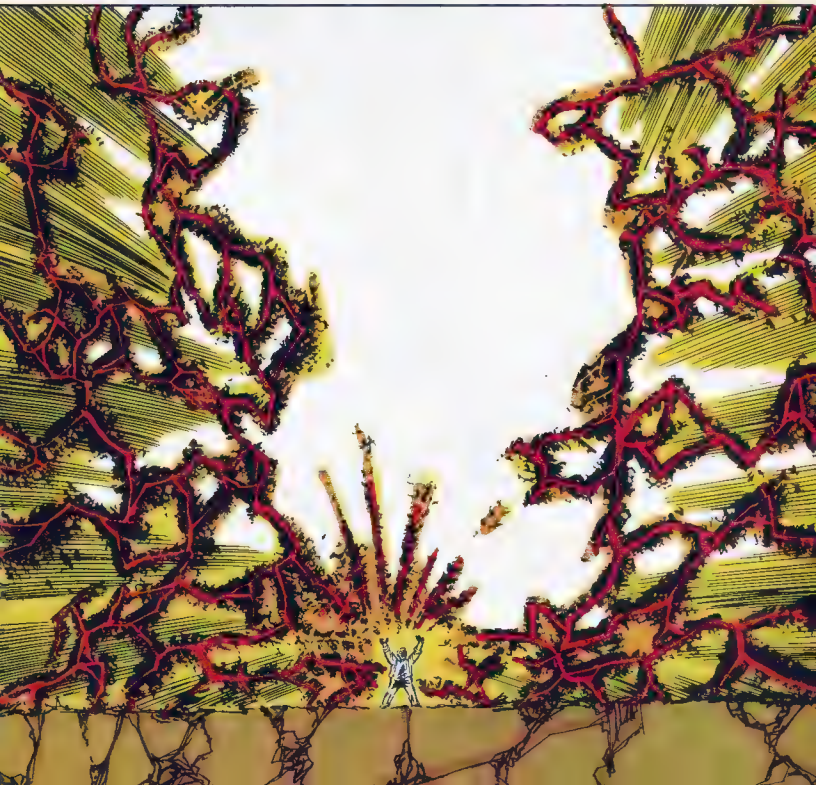
...AND FOUND THE CITY OF PITTSBURGH COMPLETELY UNTOUCHED BY THE HOLOCAUST.

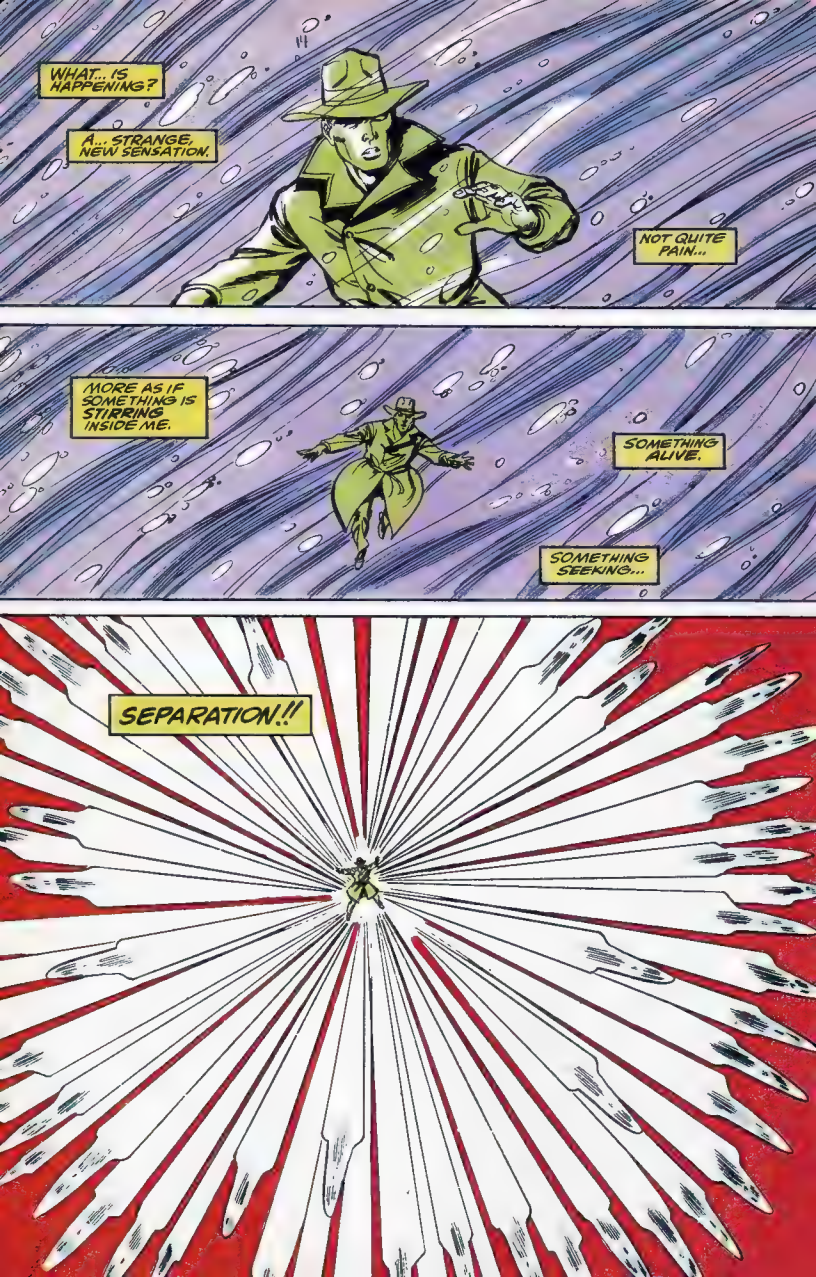
DOWN ACROSS THE PEACEFUL STREETS I DRIFTED.
IT WAS THREE DAYS BEFORE CHRISTMAS. THE MOOD WAS FESTIVE, JOYFUL.
THEN I RECEIVED THE GREATEST SHOCK OF MY SPIRITUAL UNLIFE...
THE PEOPLE ON THE STREET COULD SEE MY INVISIBLE, INTANGIBLE FORM.
THEY ATTACKED ME!
AND WHEN I TRIED TO FLEE, THEY FOLLOWED!
I WAS OVERCOME BY FEAR, BY TERROR AND PSYCHIC AGONY.
I REALIZED THEY WERE AS DEAD AS I...
...AND THAT SOMEHOW THEY BLAMED ME FOR WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO THEM.
AND THEN, SUDDENLY...
...THEY WERE GONE!!

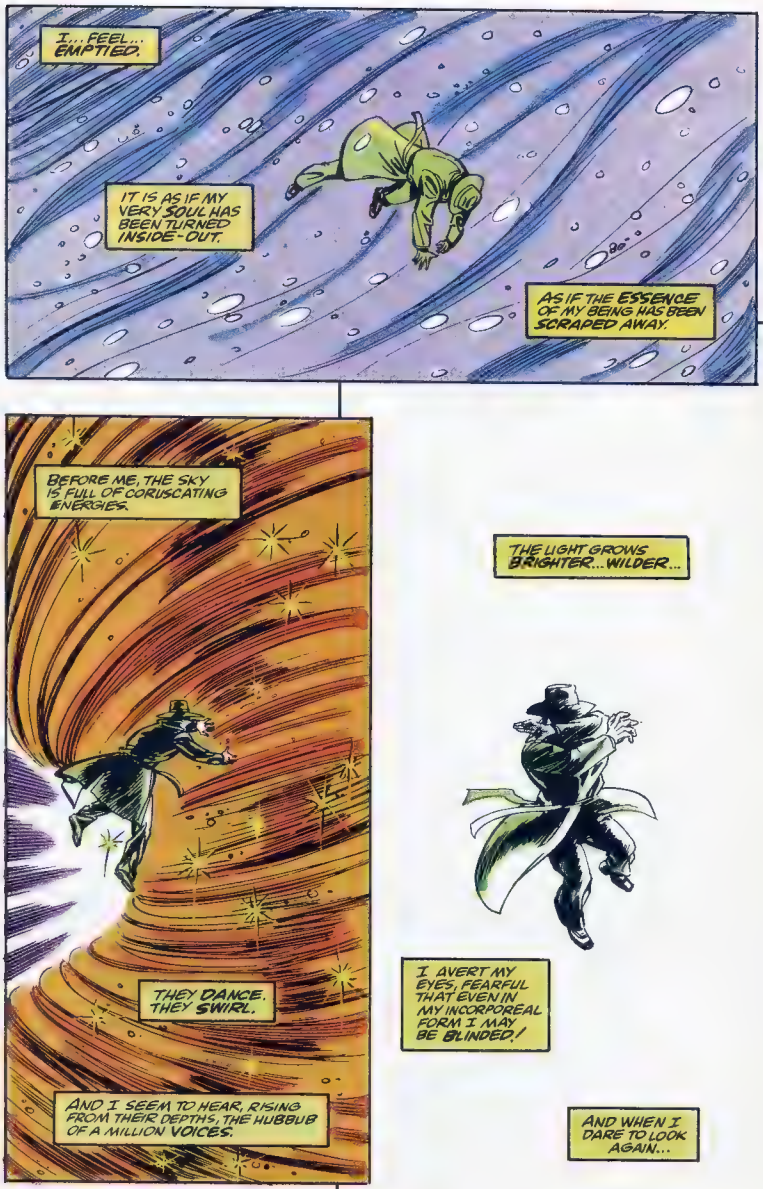

WERE THE STRANGE NEW VOICES IN MY MIND, AND A CRATER
A GIGANTIC HOLE NEARLY 50 MILES ACROSS!
THE SAME HOLE TOWARD WHICH THE NEW FLYING MAY NOW DRIFTS.
IT'S LIKE STANDING ON THE EDGE OF THE WORLD!

WELL, JAKE, THIS IS IT.
THIS IS THE BIG JOB YOU'VE SET YOURSELF UP FOR.

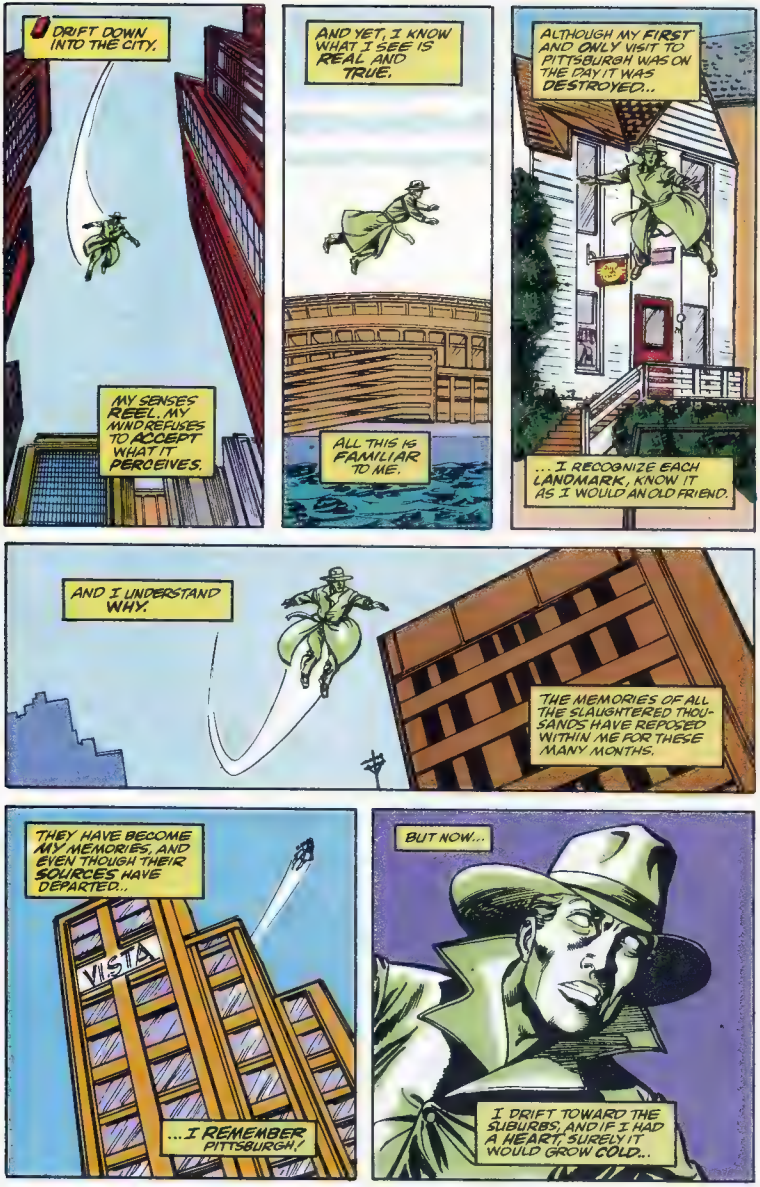

LET'S SEE IF YOU CAN GET IT DONE!

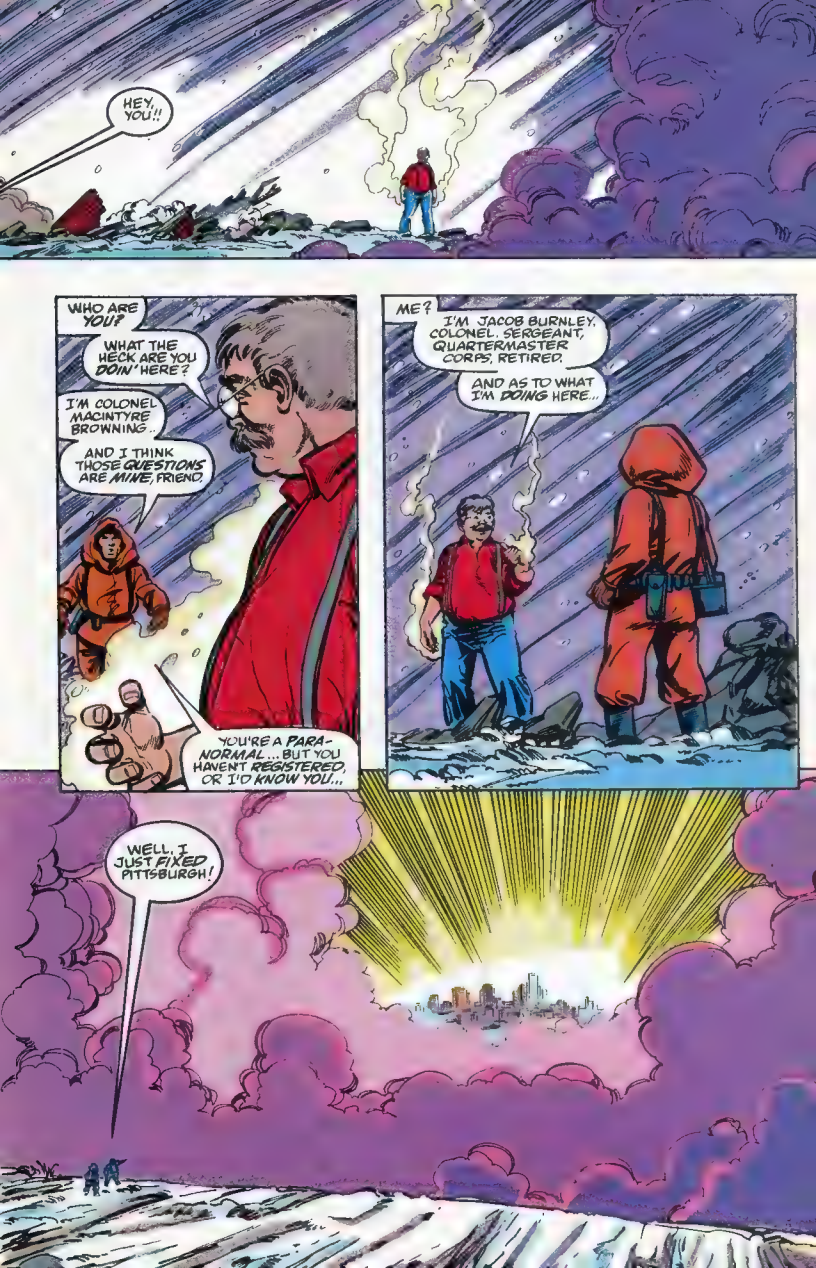



WHAT... IS HAPPENING?
A... STRANGE, NEW SENSATION.
NOT QUITE PAIN...
MORE AS IF SOMETHING IS STIRRING INSIDE ME.
SOMETHING ALIVE.
SOMETHING SEEKING...
SEPARATION!!


I... FEEL... EMPTIED.
IT IS AS IF MY VERY SOUL HAS BEEN TURNED INSIDE-OUT.
AS IF THE ESSENCE OF MY BEING HAS BEEN SCRAPED AWAY.
BEFORE ME, THE SKY IS FULL OF CORUSCATING ENERGIES.
THE LIGHT GROWS BRIGHTER... WILDER...
I AVERT MY EYES, FEARFUL THAT EVEN IN MY INCORPOREAL FORM I MAY BE BLINDED!
THEY DANCE. THEY SWIRL.
AND I SEEM TO HEAR, RISING FROM THEIR DEPTHS, THE HUBBUB OF A MILLION VOICES.
AND WHEN I DARE TO LOOK AGAIN...

PITTSBURGH IS REBORN!

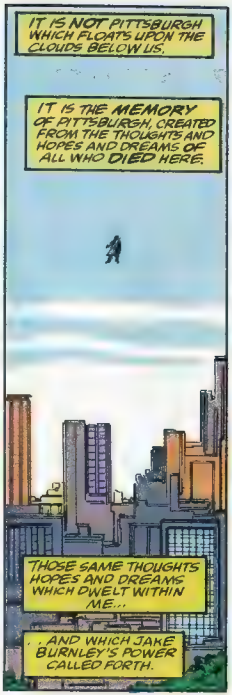

I DRIFT DOWN INTO THE CITY.
MY SENSES REEL. MY MIND REFUSES TO ACCEPT WHAT IT PERCEIVES.
AND YET, I KNOW WHAT I SEE IS REAL AND TRUE.
ALL THIS IS FAMILIAR TO ME.
ALTHOUGH MY FIRST AND ONLY VISIT TO PITTSBURGH WAS ON THE DAY IT WAS DESTROYED...
...I RECOGNIZE EACH LANDMARK, KNOW IT AS I WOULD AN OLD FRIEND.
AND I UNDERSTAND WHY.
THE MEMORIES OF ALL THE SLAUGHTERED THOUSANDS HAVE REPOSED WITHIN ME FOR THESE MANY MONTHS.
THEY HAVE BECOME MY MEMORIES, AND EVEN THOUGH THEIR SOURCES HAVE DEPARTED...
VISTA
...I REMEMBER PITTSBURGH!
BUT NOW...
I DRIFT TOWARD THE SUBURBS, AND IF I HAD A HEART, SURELY IT WOULD GROW COLD...


HEY, YOU!!
WHO ARE YOU?
WHAT THE HECK ARE YOU DOIN' HERE?
I'M COLONEL MACINTYRE BROWNING...
AND I THINK THOSE QUESTIONS ARE MINE, FRIEND.
YOU'RE A PARA-NORMAL... BUT YOU HAVEN'T REGISTERED, OR I'D KNOW YOU...
ME?
I'M JACOB BURNLEY. COLONEL, SERGEANT, QUARTERMASTER CORPS, RETIRED.
AND AS TO WHAT I'M DOING HERE...
WELL, I JUST FIXED PITTSBURGH!

NO, MR. BURNLEY, YOU HAVE NOT.
HUH?
WHO IN THE...??
WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?
I CALL MYSELF THE WITNESS; FOR THAT IS MY FUNCTION.
AS I HOPED, YOUR POWER ENABLES YOU TO SEE MY SPIRIT FORM.
AND I MUST TELL YOU NOW THAT YOU HAVE NOT RESTORED PITTSBURGH.
I FEAR THAT IS BEYOND EVEN YOUR ABILITIES.
BURNLEY...
WHAT KIND OF GAME ARE YOU PLAYING? WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO...?
JUST HOLD ON A MINUTE, COLONEL.
NOW, EXPLAIN YOURSELF, WITNESS. WHAT DO YOU MEAN I HAVEN'T FIXED PITTSBURGH?
LOOK OUT THERE! YOU CAN SEE IT FOR YOURSELF!
YES...
FOLLOW ME, JACOB BURNLEY...
FOLLOW ME AND LEARN THE TRUTH, AS I HAVE LEARNED IT.
YOU'RE DARN RIGHT I'LL FOLLOW YOU...
BURNLEY!!
BURNLEY!! WHERE IN BLAZES DO YOU THINK YOU'RE...
OH, BLAST!
JORGENSON! JORGENSON, DO YOU READ ME?

OKAY, WITNESS, START TALKIN'!
THAT SURE LOOKS LIKE PITTSBURGH T'ME!
YES, IT LOOKS LIKE PITTSBURGH
HOW STRANGE IT FEELS TO TALK AGAIN, TO CONVERSE WITH A FELLOW BEING.
BUT LOOK MORE CLOSELY JACOB.
WHAT IN... ??
I KNOW THIS IS POSSIBLE ONLY BECAUSE JACOB BURNLEY AND I ARE PARTS OF THE SAME WHOLE.
IT'S NOT ALL THERE! IT'S JUST...
.. FLOATING ?
FLOATING ... LIKE A DREAM, JACOB.
LIKE MY OWN LOST DREAM OF LIFE...
THE EXPLOSION OF THE WHITE EVENT CREATED ME.
JAKE BURNLEY'S POWER IS THE EMBODIMENT OF THE WHITE EVENT.
OR, LIKE A MEMORY...

I WATCH THE OLD MAN DRIFT AWAY IN SILENCE.
HIS FACE HAS TOLD ME WHAT HIS WORDS CAN-NOT; THAT HE UNDER-STANDS.


IT IS NOT PITTSBURGH WHICH FLOATS UPON THE CLOUDS BELOW US.
IT IS THE MEMORY OF PITTSBURGH, CREATED FROM THE THOUGHTS AND HOPES AND DREAMS OF ALL WHO DIED HERE.
THOSE SAME THOUGHTS HOPES AND DREAMS WHICH DWELT WITHIN ME...
...AND WHICH JAKE BURNLEY'S POWER CALLED FORTH.

BUT IT WAS THAT SAME POWER, WIELDED BY ANOTHER, WHICH ANNIHILATED PITTSBURGH.
AND THAT ANNIHILATION WAS COMPLETE. ABSOLUTE.
ONLY MY STRANGE INHUMAN EXISTENCE ALLOWED ME TO AB-SORB, FOR A WHILE, THE SUPERFICIAL CONSCIOUS MINDS OF THOSE WHO LIVED HERE.

THEIR SOULS ARE LONG-SINCE GONE.
THEIR DREAMS LONG-SINCE DENIED.
AND, LIKE THE MEMORY IT IS, THIS FLOATING, PHANTOM CITY WILL SOON FADE AWAY...

MEANWHILE...
OH, NO...
OH, NO...
NOT AGAIN...
TO BE CONTINUED..

Nightmask
GATE
TEDDY BARE!
GET IT? TEDDY-- THAT'S YOU-- BARE-- YOUR SOUL NAKED TO MY DREAM PROBES--OOH, KINK!
KEITH! PLEASE-- GIVE ME MY CHAIR BACK-- I CAN'T GET AROUND WITHOUT IT!
AND WHY IS THAT, MY PHYSICALLY-DILAPIDATED LITTLE PUDDLE OF FAMILIAL FLESH?

FABIAN NICIEZA
RANCOROUS WRITER

RON LIM
PORTENTIOUS PENCILER

MARK McKENNA
INSTIGATING INKER

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LIBERTINE LETTERER

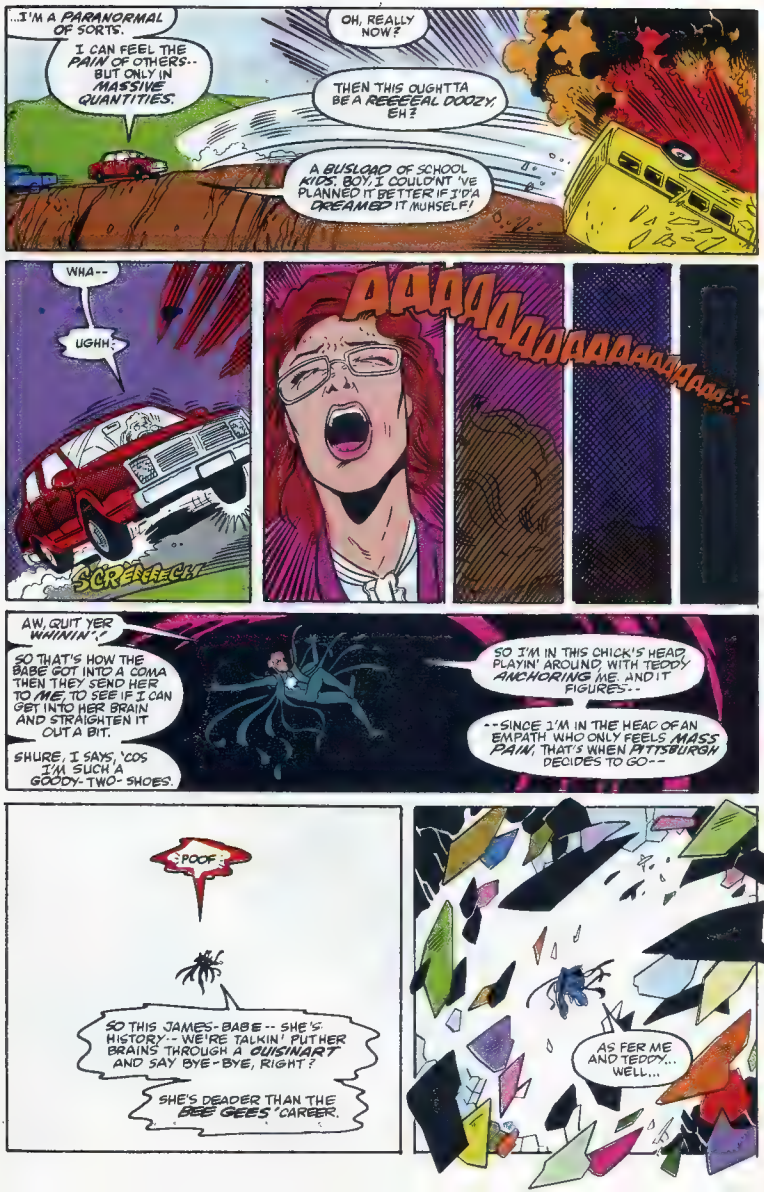
MARC SIRY
CAVORTING COLORIST

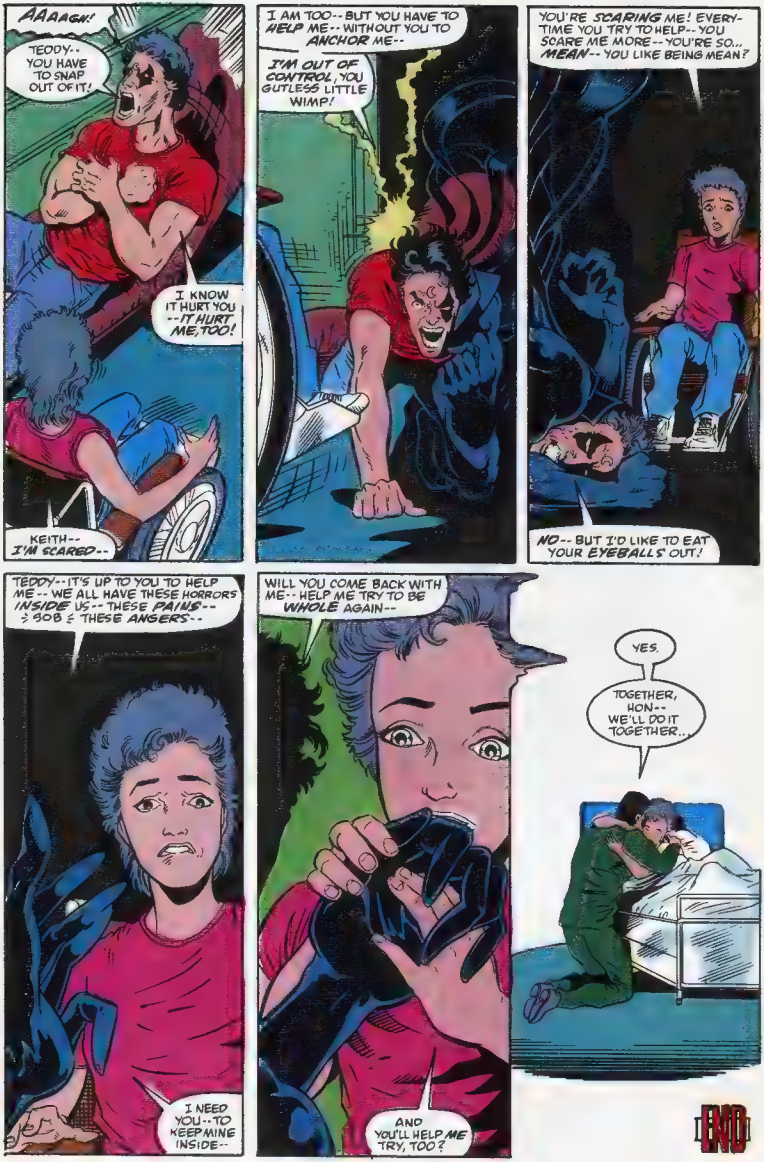
DAVID WOHL
EVISCERATING EDITOR

BECAUSE OF THE AIR...PORT... EXPLO.....SION ?
OH, MY GOD!
GATE 50
MOM! DAD!
THAT'S NOT YOUR LUGGAGE!
DON'T TOUCH THAT BAG--
THERE'S A--
-- BOMB--
BOOM. POW. POOF. OUCH.
-- IN THAT BAG --
KEITH?
YOU'RE OKAY?
SURE AM, OH SMALL WONDER
SAY, WOULD YOU HAPPEN TO KNOW...
...WHERE MY LUGGAGE WENT?
KEITH REMSEN BOMBS - A LIS
REDEEMABLE AT PARENTS ONLY

NO--YOU DION'T--YOU COULDN'T--
YOU'RE JUST JEALOUS COS' I'M NOT A HOPELESS BABY LIKE YOU--NYAH--NYAH!!
NOOOOOO
OOOOO, OOOH...
KEITH--ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
--HAPPENED AGAIN--WORSE--SHE'S BLAMING ME--FOR EVERYTHING--
SHE'S BLAMING ME FOR OUR PARENTS' DEATH. SHE'S BLAMING ME FOR THE FACT THAT SHE WAS PARALYZED.
LITA--LUCIEN--I HAVE TO GO BACK IN. I HAVE TO HELP HER.
YOU'LL DO NO SUCH THING, YOUNG MAN. YOUR SISTER HAS BEEN IN A COMA FOR MONTHS NOW AND WE'RE DOING ALL WE CAN FOR HER HERE AT BETHESDA.
EVERYTIME YOU COME HERE AND DIVE INTO HER SUBCONSCIOUS DREAM STATE, YOU PUSH HER FURTHER AWAY FROM US!
YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW FAR GONE SHE IS ALREADY, BALLAD!
YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT WE WENT THROUGH TOGETHER.
I'M NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE TERRORIST EXPLOSION THAT KILLED OUR PARENTS--BUT IT IS MY FAULT SHE'S NOW IN A COMA...

... AND I'LL DO EVERYTHING I CAN TO GET HER--
-OUT?
NO--I'M IN--BUT IT'S SO--STABLE--I'M IN CONTROL AGAIN--
AND THE SKYLINE--THIS IS PITTSBURGH!
BUT PITTSBURGH'S A BABY VOLCANO NOW--WHAT'S GOING ON?
WAIT--THIS IS THE WINDOW TO OUR OLD PSYCHIATRIC CLINIC IN GEORGETOWN! WHAT'S IT DOING IN PITTSBURGH?
THAT'S TEDDY--WHEN SHE WAS OKAY--ACTING AS MY REALITY-ANCHOR AS I DREAM-PROBED A PATIENT...
OH, GOD--THAT'S HILARY JAMES--I CAN'T GO THROUGH IT AGAIN--*
* CHECK OUT PSI-FORCE #16.
I CAN'T GO THROUGH THAT NIGHTMARE...
--AGAIN?
AW, WHAT THE HECK--ONE MORE FER THE ROAD!
HEY, HILARY-BABY--CALIGHT YOUR SHOW LAST WEEK.
ALL THAT CORNBALL POP PSYCHIATRY AIN'T FER ME THOUGH, BABE--I LIKE TO GET INTO THE NITTY-GRITTY IF YA KNOW WHUT I MEAN!
WELL, IF YOU MUST KNOW, IT'S MORE THAN FRILLY CELEBRITY INTERVIEWS THAT DRIVES ME ONWARDS--
SHUIRE. IT'S THE MOOLAH. THE GREEN. CASH. BUCKS. DINERO. DOLLARS AND SENSE.
THERE'S THAT, OF COURSE, BUT MORE.
YOU SEE, I'M SOMETHING OF AN EMPATH...


...I'M A PARANORMAL OF SORTS.
I CAN FEEL THE PAIN OF OTHERS-- BUT ONLY IN MASSIVE QUANTITIES.
OH, REALLY NOW?
THEN THIS OUGHTTA BE A REEEEAL DOOZY, EH?
A BUSLOAD OF SCHOOL KIDS. BOY, I COULDN'T'VE PLANNED IT BETTER IF I'D A DREAMED IT MUHSELF!
WHA--
UGHH.
SCREECH!
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!
AW, QUIT YER WHIININ'.
SO THAT'S HOW THE BABE GOT INTO A COMA THEN THEY SEND HER TO ME, TO SEE IF I CAN GET INTO HER BRAIN AND STRAIGHTEN IT OUT A BIT.
SHURE, I SAYS, 'COS I'M SUCH A GOODY-TWO-SHOES.
SO I'M IN THIS CHICK'S HEAD PLAYIN' AROUND WITH TEDDY ANCHORING ME. AND IT FIGURES--
--SINCE I'M IN THE HEAD OF AN EMPATH WHO ONLY FEELS MASS PAIN, THAT'S WHEN PITTSBURGH DECIDES TO GO--
POOF
SO THIS JAMES-BABE -- SHE'S HISTORY -- WE'RE TALKIN' PUTHER BRAINS THROUGH A QUISINART AND SAY BYE-BYE, RIGHT?
SHE'S DEADER THAN THE BEE GEES' CAREER.
AS FER ME AND TEDDY... WELL...


AAAAGH!
TEDDY--YOU HAVE TO SNAP OUT OF IT!
I KNOW IT HURT YOU--IT HURT ME, TOO!
KEITH--I'M SCARED--
I AM TOO--BUT YOU HAVE TO HELP ME--WITHOUT YOU TO ANCHOR ME--
I'M OUT OF CONTROL, YOU GUTLESS LITTLE WIMP!
YOU'RE SCARING ME! EVERY-TIME YOU TRY TO HELP--YOU SCARE ME MORE--YOU'RE SO... MEAN--YOU LIKE BEING MEAN?
NO--BUT I'D LIKE TO EAT YOUR EYEBALLS OUT!
TEDDY--IT'S UP TO YOU TO HELP ME--WE ALL HAVE THESE HORRORS INSIDE US--THESE PAINS--THESE ANGERS--
I NEED YOU--TO KEEP MINE INSIDE--
WILL YOU COME BACK WITH ME--HELP ME TRY TO BE WHOLE AGAIN--
AND YOU'LL HELP ME TRY, TOO?
YES.
TOGETHER, HON--WE'LL DO IT TOGETHER...
THE END

THEY WERE BOUND TO RETURN.

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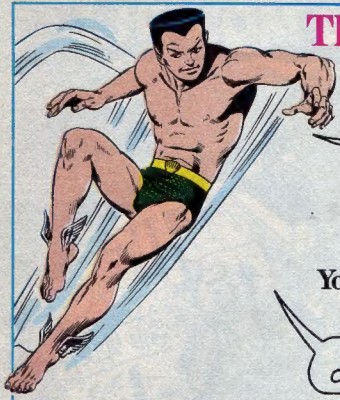

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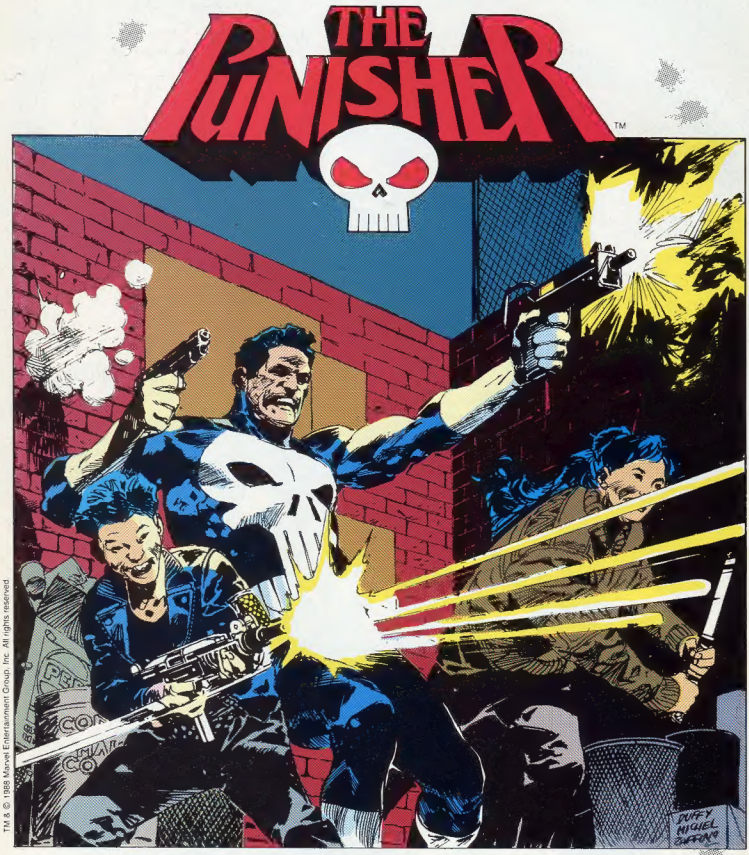

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